

Published: Nov. 17, 2014, Kokomo Tribune [Page: 5, special section]

http://www.kokomotribune.com/news/local_news/tornadoes-damage-homes-and-commercial-properties/article_ccb3df7e-6b43-11e4-8c57-a3c411fcc273.html



Photos by Tim Bath | Kokomo Tribune

FORTUNATE ONE: Karen Glendenning stands outside her home on Meadowbrook Drive. During last year's tornado, her home, along with many others in the neighborhood, was damaged.



DAMAGE: Tornado damage on the east and south sides of Kokomo as seen Nov. 17, 2013. Winston Howard and son, William Howard, check through debris in front of their house on Meadowbrook Drive in the Cedar Crest neighborhood after the tornado came through.

Tornadoes damage 300 homes and commercial properties

Recovering for the long term: Local team organizes volunteers and private donations

By Rob Burgess
Tribune night editor

It was around 2 p.m. Nov. 17, 2013 and Karen and Jay Glendenning were dozing off in front of the TV. It was a Sunday afternoon and the husband and wife were recovering from a “lovely” Mexican vacation. They had arrived back at 12:30 a.m., exhausted. Karen awoke starving and left their

Meadowbrook Drive home in search of sustenance. When she returned successful, the couple dug in.

“No sooner had we finished eating when all the sudden the sirens went off,” said Karen. “Sometimes you get complacent to that sort of thing, and I wasn’t all that concerned.”

Jay, however, was.

“My husband, being the man that he is, is standing at the back door, just watching,” she said.

Just then, a “huge wind gust” accompanied by sideways rain hit.

“Get down!” Jay screamed to Karen, who dropped right to the floor.

Immediately realizing she was in front of the picture window, Jay directed her away.

“He had me crawl to the back hallway,” said Karen. “I had bruises on my knees for two weeks from doing that.”

She heard glass breaking. She began to recite the Lord’s Prayer.

“And then it was over with,” she said. “That quickly.”

The Glendennings, along with the rest of Kokomo, had just escaped serious injury or death in the third most numerous tornado outbreak ever recorded

in Indiana. Damaging storms had also ravaged Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin. The National Weather Service later determined two category F2 tornadoes had cut through the south end of Kokomo that day, causing “considerable damage” and hitting estimated top speeds of 120 miles per hour.

“We went outside to kind of assess the damage, and I saw the devastation,” she said.

“We went outside to kind of assess the damage, and I saw the devastation.”

An initial assessment completed two days later by the city determined 300 homes and commercial properties in total were damaged. Dozens of homes and up to 30 businesses had been destroyed. The city imposed a curfew for the tornado-damaged areas from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. through the following Friday night.

The Glendennings, along with tens of thousands of other Hoosiers, were without electricity. Fortunately, they had a place to go. With the help of

Jay's brother, who parked a block away, they were able to scale fences with suitcases in hand. They stayed with family for the next five days.

Meanwhile, the cleanup effort had already begun.

"I was making calls Sunday evening saying, 'Hey we're going to get together Monday,'" said Abbie Smith, president of the United Way of Howard County and the chairman of the Long Term Recovery Team.

The following weekend's Volunteer Saturday saw unprecedented levels of community support. Around 1,275 volunteers descended upon the scene to assist in the cleanup.

Desier Brannon was asked by Smith to help organize the logistics.

"It felt like it was so chaotic behind the scenes," said Brannon. "But we pulled it off without a hitch. On that Saturday we almost nearly cleared everything. Every job was complete that was on the agenda that day."

But, in many ways, the brokenness was far from being made whole. Clearing the major tree damage was a challenge. Trees blocked roadways, driveways and yards. When Howard County as a whole applied for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency the following month, it listed infrastructure costs of \$412,500 for debris removal and \$309,840 for protective measures, according to a document provided by Jennifer Jordan, Kokomo's director of development.

“Even after all that was cleared a lot of the cases were, ‘I can’t get through my driveway because there is a tree sitting there and insurance doesn’t cover that,’” said Smith.

Between their homes, cars and garage, the Glendennings estimated their damage at around \$40,000.

“We were one of the very fortunate ones,” said Karen. “Other than having no power, our home was livable.”

**“We were one of the very fortunate ones.
Other than having no power, our home was
livable.”**

Others were not as lucky. In all, \$2.8 million in damages to Howard County homes was recorded. The LTRT began collecting donations and soon amassed \$119,688 in donations from businesses and individuals. Smith said the United Way of Howard County served as the fiscal sponsor and assisted in distributing the funds to 109 families. She said any payments of \$1,000 or less could be spent with one signature from the case management

committee, but anything over had to go through the financial controls committee.

“We were easily able to take in gifts that people wanted to give and keep it separate for tornado recovery and get it back out that way,” said Smith.

The team was assisted by World Renew Volunteers, based out of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Known as the “Green Shirts,” the group consists of volunteers from all over the country who go to storm-damaged areas and identify what’s left to be done after initial cleanup.

Despite this commercial and personal generosity, no federal help would be forthcoming for the state. As it did previously with the April 2013 100-year flood in Kokomo and later with the winter blizzard, FEMA denied Howard County’s Dec. 4 request for assistance Dec. 11. On Dec. 23, the state appealed. On Jan. 8, it was once again rejected. (FEMA officials did note, however, individuals harmed by a disaster could apply for low-interest loans from the Small Business Administration. A property owner or business owner would have had to have been creditworthy to apply.)

“I really think that we were prepared as a committee for that denial,” said Smith. “Getting that denial really was just our license to work and do what we needed to do.”

And for people like the Glendennings, what needed to be done meant replacing the gutters. Even though the couple was insured, it wasn't enough.

"We had a difficult year this year," said Karen. "My husband had his second hip replacement the first week of January. He was slated to be off work for three months. So we kind of planned for that. Well, he had some difficulties, so he ended up being off for six months, and we ended up kind of having to dip into some of our insurance money to live on. So, when it came time to get to our gutters, which is pretty much the last of our repairs, we were short."

And that's where the LTRT stepped in. They paid for the new gutters, which were installed earlier this month.

"I had to laugh this morning when I got up because I looked outside and I was kind of hoping for another sunny day," she said recently. "I was disappointed when I saw the rain. And then all of the sudden I laughed because I thought God is showing me how well my new gutters work."

In addition to the LTRT, Glendenning said she was particularly grateful to police officers, firemen, the American Red Cross and the Kokomo Rescue Mission, among many others.

Smith said she's not surprised at how the community came to its own rescue.

“You’ll ask people what they can give, and they’ll step up every time,” she said. “It’s believing everyone has something to give.”

-

By the numbers

\$2.8 million — Estimated amount of damage to Howard County homes from the Nov. 17, 2013 tornadoes

\$412,500 — Cost to Howard County infrastructure for debris removal

\$309,840.88 — Cost to Howard County infrastructure for protective measures

\$119,688.32 — Total amount of donations to the Kokomo Disaster Relief Fund

45,000 — Estimated number of Duke Energy customers who lost power in the state as of 4:30 p.m. Nov. 17, 2013

16,500 — Estimated number of Indiana residents (including Indiana Michigan Power Co. and Duke Energy customers) who were still without power in the state Nov. 20, 2013

9,300 — Estimated number of Duke Energy customers still without power in the Lafayette and Kokomo districts Nov. 20, 2013

1,500 — Estimated number of total volunteers who assisted in the cleanup in the months after the tornado

1,275 — Estimated number of volunteers who assisted in the cleanup Nov. 24, 2013

888 — Number of World Renew Disaster Response Service forms handed out to residents in the aftermath

400 — Estimated number of Kokomo-area students who volunteered Nov. 18, 2013

300 — Estimated total number of Kokomo homes and commercial properties damaged Nov. 17, 2013

2-1-1 — The United Way of Howard County's action line phone number

120 — Estimated top speed in mph of the tornadoes that touched down in Kokomo Nov. 17, 2013

109 — Families assisted by the Long Term Recovery Team

60 — Estimated number of Kokomo homes destroyed by the Nov. 17, 2013 tornadoes

48 — Years between the Kokomo's 1965 Palm Sunday tornado outbreak and the Nov. 17, 2013 tornadoes, both of which cut a remarkably similar path

33 — Number of tornadoes in the state June 2, 1990, the most ever recorded

32 — Number of people who visited Kokomo-area emergency rooms with tornado-related injuries Nov. 17, 2013

30 — Estimated number of Kokomo businesses destroyed by the Nov. 17, 2013 tornadoes

29 — Number of tornadoes in the state April 19, 2011, the second most ever recorded

28 — Number of tornadoes in the state Nov. 17, 2013, the third most ever recorded

12 — Number of Indiana counties that reported either tornado or storm damage Nov. 17, 2013

10 — Estimated length in miles of one of the tornadoes that touched down Nov. 17, 2013 in Kokomo

7 — Months between Kokomo's April 2013 100-year flood and the Nov. 17, 2013 tornadoes

5 — Number of patients admitted to Kokomo-area hospitals with tornado-related injuries Nov. 17, 2013

2 — Number of times the Federal Emergency Management Agency denied Indiana's request for tornado recovery aid

2 — Number of tornadoes that touched down Nov. 17, 2013 in Kokomo

2 — Number on out of a possible five on the Fujita Scale the National Weather Service rated the Nov. 17, 2013 tornadoes in Kokomo

0 — Number of tornado-related serious injuries and deaths in Kokomo Nov. 17, 2013

\$0 — Amount of money FEMA contributed to Kokomo for tornado recovery aid

Sources: *The United Way of Howard County, City of Kokomo, Tribune Staff Reports and The Associated Press*

-

Long Term Recovery Team committee leaders

The LTRT was led by the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, who share knowledge and resources in a disaster cycle.

Abbie Smith – Chairman

Van Taylor – Warehouse coordinator

Myles Geary and Beth Rattray – Communication directors

Stephanie Berghoff and Cheryl Graham – Case managers

Lee Miller and Dale Bliss – Head of construction

Jeff Brown – Spiritual counsel

Travis Taflinger – Volunteer coordinator

Jim Gunlite and Kevin Sprinkle – Field Coordinators

United Way of Howard County – Fiscal sponsor

Hilda Burns – Financial coordinator

Darrell Blasius – Food coordinator

Chad McCarter and Desier Brannon – Co-coordinators of
Volunteer Saturday

Source: *United Way of Howard County*

-

Corporate sponsors of the Kokomo Disaster Relief Fund

Acacia Academy

American Red Cross

Anchor Home Health

Chapter V PEO Sisterhood

Chrysler KCP

Common Wealth Engineers

Community First Bank

CU Business Group

Delphi Employee Collection

Duke Energy

EON

Expressions

Faith Pre. Church

First Presbyterian Church

GM Event

Golden Times

Great American Smokeout

Harley Davidson

Haynes Apperson Festival

Islamic Association

IUK Cougars

Jewish Federation of Indianapolis

Key Bank Foundation

Kokomo Civic Theatre

Kokomo High School

Kokomo Jewish Temple

NABATA

Network for Good

Nisource Cheritable Foundation

Northwestern Middle-Senior High School

Pat McAfee Show

Pioneer Elementary School

Salin Bank

Salin Bank Event

Security Federal

Solutions Day Spa

Southside Christian Church

Temple B'nai Isreal Sisterhood

Tippecanoe Christian Youth Group

Tipton High School

UAW Local 1302

Visiting Nurse Service

Western Middle School

Winchester Friends Church

Source: *United Way of Howard County*